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SYSTEM II

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

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April 20, 1982

MEMORANDUM FOR

Ms. Nancy Bearg Dyke  
Assistant to the Vice President  
for National Security Affairs

Mr. L. Paul Bremer III  
Executive Secretary  
Department of State

Lieutenant Colonel Robert P. Meehan  
Assistant for Interagency Matters  
Office of the Secretary of Defense

Mr. William Schneider  
Associate Director for National  
Security and International Affairs  
Office of Management and Budget

SUBJECT: NSC Meeting on START

[Redacted]  
Executive Secretary  
Central Intelligence Agency

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Ms. Jacqueline Tillman  
Executive Assistant to the  
United States  
Representative to the United States

Colonel Charles F. Stebbins  
Executive Assistant to the  
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

Mr. Joseph Presel  
Executive Assistant  
Arms Control and Disarmament Agency

A National Security Council meeting has been scheduled for Wednesday, April 21, 1982, at 10:30 a.m. in the Cabinet Room to discuss START units of account. A Background paper is attached.

*Michael O. Wheeler*  
Michael O. Wheeler  
Staff Secretary

Attachment

START Discussion Paper

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Review April 20, 2002

Classified and Extended by William P. Clark

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START DISCUSSION PAPER

This paper summarizes those issues which should determine a U.S. START negotiating position. A five-page summary of criteria and candidate elements for limitation is followed by a short description of agency views on those elements and our approach to the negotiations.

Criteria

The following criteria are those which must guide formulation of a position for START:

- o Military capability. A START agreement must permit the U.S. to develop and possess sufficient military capability, taking into account that allowed to the Soviet Union, to deter the Soviet Union and to execute the U.S. national military strategy with reasonable assurance of success.
- o Equality. Nothing less than equality is acceptable in the provisions of any future strategic arms limitation agreement for military reasons and for political/perceptual reasons.
- o Strategic stability. A START agreement must promote stability by reducing the vulnerability of U.S. strategic forces. Significant constraints on the most threatening Soviet systems -- ICBMs -- could contribute to this goal.
- o Effective verification. A START agreement must provide for necessary counting rules, collateral constraints, and cooperative measures required to achieve this objective.
- o Substantial reductions on each side. Whatever unit of measurement is adopted should lend itself to substantial reductions below current levels of forces. Reductions should be to equal ceilings.
- o Easily understood. To gain support and hence underscore the credibility of the U.S. negotiating position, the approach we choose should be explainable in clear and simple terms.
- o Alliance impact. A START agreement should take into account Allied concerns: the ability of the U.S. to maintain a credible deterrent, the relationship of the START approach to the INF negotiations, and the likelihood of success.

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o Anticipated Soviet reaction. The Soviets will undoubtedly resist any of the reductions proposals now being considered. We should concern ourselves with how defensible the proposal is against Soviet propaganda efforts.

### Units of Account

Which elements of strategic nuclear forces should be subject to specific limitations in a START agreement? This "unit of account" issue has been the focus of interagency discussion and is of central importance in defining the basic framework of a U.S. START position. The basic unit used in SALT II was strategic nuclear delivery vehicles (ballistic missile launchers plus heavy bombers). All agencies agree that this unit alone is inadequate for START, but there are disagreements on how it should be supplemented or replaced.

Possible candidates for limitations, which are not mutually exclusive, include the number of ballistic missile warheads, ballistic missile warhead weight, ballistic missile throw-weight, and the number of strategic nuclear delivery vehicles.

### Summary of Alternative Units of Account

#### 1. Number of Ballistic Missile Warheads

The number of warheads, the weapons atop missiles, are a direct indicator of strategic power. The sides are about equal in the number of ballistic missile warheads. All agencies concur that a START agreement should provide for reductions of ballistic missile warheads to an equal level for each side. Agencies differ as to what that level should be.

#### 2. The Number of Ballistic Missile Launchers

Views differ on the desirability of limiting the number of launchers (a device that launches ballistic missiles). The Soviets have a substantial lead in launchers. Some agencies believe such limits are important to reduce the potential for a rapid buildup of Soviet strategic capabilities in the event of treaty abrogation (i.e., a large force of single warhead missiles permitted by a Treaty might be rapidly fitted with multiple warheads). They also believe

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that limiting launchers will facilitate verification and preserve some continuity with past negotiations. Other agencies believe such limits are undesirable because they could foreclose possible U.S. options and do not by themselves significantly reduce Soviet capabilities.

3. Ballistic Missile Throw-Weight and/or Warhead Weight

Missile throw-weight is the weight that can be delivered by an individual missile; it effectively determines the number and size of warheads that can be delivered by a ballistic missile. The Soviets have a growing advantage in throw-weight: currently about 2-1/2 times the U.S. level of missile throw-weight. Some agencies believe we should explicitly seek sharp reductions in throw-weight to equality at low levels. Other agencies believe it would be preferable to seek constraints on warhead weight. Still other agencies would seek sharp reduction in Soviet throw-weight by requiring reductions in or the elimination of the Soviets' heavy ICBMs, i.e., the SS-18, plus constraints on future ICBMs.

4. Bombers

All agencies agree that it is to the U.S. advantage to seek different, looser constraints on bombers than on missiles. The United States currently has a small lead in bombers even if Soviet BACKFIRE bombers are included, and a substantial lead in bomber weapons. All agree that BACKFIRE should be included and that we could accept equal levels of bombers. Some agencies prefer that such limits be omitted from the U.S. opening position.

Verification

In general, the Intelligence Community believes that high confidence levels in monitoring units of account, where achievable, will require access to flight test data, prohibitions on concealment, type and counting rules and agreed definitions. In many cases, cooperative measures would be needed to enhance and supplement national technical means. Our capabilities to monitor the units of account under consideration are summarized below. It should be noted that the relative verifiability of these units of account depends on factors such as specific treaty provisions and collateral constraints, which are beyond the scope of this

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paper. In addition, there are factors, such as refire missiles, which could have a significant impact on verification but would affect equally all the units of account.

A. Ballistic Missile Launchers

High confidence in counting SLBM and fixed ICBM launchers can be achieved with national technical means and appropriate counting rules. For land-mobile ICBM launchers, intrusive measures would be required for high confidence.

B. Deployed Ballistic Missile Warheads

With flight test data and counting rules, we would have high confidence in the number of warheads to be attributed to each missile system and high confidence in the aggregate deployed warhead count for SLBMs and fixed ICBM launchers.

C. Deployed Ballistic Missile Throw-Weight

With flight test data, we can determine maximum demonstrated throw-weight for each system within 10-25%, but without usable telemetry, uncertainty would more than double for new systems. At present, with virtually no uncertainty in launcher count for ICBMs and SLBMs, current throw-weight uncertainty for the Soviet forces is 20%, i.e., 5 million + 1 million kilograms. Changes to throw-weight on an existing system can be determined within 3-5% with telemetry, and to about 20% uncertainty without telemetry.

D. Monitoring Warhead Weight

At present, our capability to monitor warhead weight is analogous to throw-weight (10-25% per warhead). This capability will improve somewhat to 10-15% this fall with a new collector.

E. Throw-Weight/Warhead Weight Relationship

We can determine the throw-weight/warhead weight relationship with high confidence (3-5%) with telemetry, and without telemetry, to about 20-30% uncertainty.

The Intelligence Community also points out that the absence of restrictions on new ICBM launcher construction could introduce difficult monitoring problems.

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~~TOP SECRET~~Questions for Discussion

Note: Although the choice of the units of account will be a critical decision in determining our negotiating proposal for START, the scale of reductions that we seek to achieve is equally critical. Thus, in addressing the questions below, the proposed level of limitations as well as the units of account should be discussed.

1. How does our choice of units of account help us to achieve significant reductions and also protect our military requirements?
2. How does our choice of units of account build or undercut support for the President's strategic modernization program and for the defense program as a whole?
3. What is the political environment surrounding START? How does the choice of units of account build or undercut support for the U.S. position?
  - with the public?
  - in Congress?
  - with our Allies?
4. Is continuity with SALT I and SALT II good or bad?
5. How does verification bear on the choice of the U.S. negotiating proposal?
6. Are some proposals more resilient than others? What is the relationship between our negotiating position and the likely course of the negotiations?
7. Do we require equality in every important measure of strategic capability? What are the requirements of Public Law 92-448?

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~~SECRET~~State Department Views

The choice of our START proposal will be one of the most important decisions reached in this Administration. Our supporters and critics alike will view our proposals as a litmus test of our seriousness in seeking an agreement.

It is imperative that our proposal elicit broad support in the US and with our allies, enhancing the credibility of US arms control policy and strengthening the President's position during his trip to Europe and to the UN in June. This is clear in view of the political challenges of the freeze movement in the US and the peace movement in Europe. We must keep this in mind in choosing a negotiating approach.

The State proposal seeks to strike a balance between cosmetic arms control such as SALT II (which would allow the Soviet buildup to continue) and an approach which would offer little hope of success and thus provide an easy target for those who argue that we are not serious about arms control.

The State approach would focus on the most easily understood indicators of strategic power: nuclear weapons and their delivery systems. Specifically, this approach would:

- require both sides to reduce to a common ceiling of 5000 ballistic missile warheads and a sublimit of 2500 ICBM warheads (SALT II placed no direct limits on warheads);

- limit missile launchers and bombers to 1500 (the SALT II ceiling was 50% higher at 2250);

- focus on the most destabilizing Soviet systems by requiring reductions in the heaviest Soviet ICBM the SS-18, which could be linked to an offer to forego MX deployment.

This approach has several advantages:

- It would keep US military options open to shape our forces to meet future threats.

- We would be able to verify these limitations with confidence.

- It would be a major step forward from SALT II but would not be seen as a total rejection of years of SALT negotiations. It would place the President center stage as a man of peace and vision, committed to negotiating seriously on an end to the arms race, thus allowing us to seize the high ground on an issue of intense public concern.

A major strength of the State approach is that it accomplishes the same military objectives as other approaches without the attendant political difficulties. In particular, the State approach would require major reductions in Soviet missile throw-weight without the problems associated with explicit limits on throw-weight. These include the following:

- Direct limits on throw-weight would be less verifiable than limits on missile warheads or launchers.

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-- Direct limits on throw-weight would create an impression of unfairness, as the Soviets would be required to make major changes in their forces without the US having to do so. This could reduce pressures on the Soviets to accept reductions, undermine public and Congressional support for the strategic modernization program, and weaken the allies' support for US nuclear policy and their confidence in our ability to do business with the Soviets.

-- Negotiations on throw-weight could lead to a ceiling considerably above US levels, creating only a cosmetic equality which would have no benefits for the US and which could diminish Congressional support for an agreement.

In sum, the State proposal offers the best hope of securing real arms reductions for our adversaries, while providing a politically attractive START position which will gain the solid support of our friends and establish the President's position as an advocate of serious arms control.

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SECRETACDA View: Limitation on the Number and Destructive Power of Ballistic Missile Warheads

Our START approach should significantly reduce missile destructive capability, and therefore should reduce the number and destructive power of ballistic missile warheads. The essential elements of this approach can be described clearly and succinctly: A cut of roughly half the total number of missile warheads, and a substantial reduction in their destructive power as well. Reductions should be phased over five years.

Warhead number. One key measure of destructive capability is the number of warheads. As missile accuracy improves, most targets can be destroyed by a single reliable warhead of nominal size. The US should press for substantial reduction in the total number of missile warheads, to an equal level of perhaps 4000 on each side, which would be roughly one-half the present numbers. A sublimit would permit no more than 2500 warheads on ICBMs. Such an approach would force the Soviets to dismantle more than half of their present ICBM force. Substantial Soviet ICBM reductions are essential if we are to achieve our objectives of enhanced deterrence and stability.

Destructive power. Limits on warheads alone would not be sufficient for an equitable agreement, since some warheads are substantially larger and more destructive than others. Soviet warheads are on average larger than US warheads, and if only warhead numbers were limited, there would be an incentive to increase missile and warhead size. To constrain such increases, and the corresponding breakout capability, there should be limits on warhead size.

A straightforward way to accomplish this would be to place limits on the weight of RVs. Any RV with a weight above the ceiling would be counted more than one, in proportion to its weight. In the long run, the weight threshold should be low, e.g., 200 kilograms (roughly the size of the MM-III RV); in the near term transitional period, the threshold could be higher, e.g., 450 kg. The low warhead ceiling could be phased in over a number of years to give the sides time to adjust their forces, and transitional arrangements could be made for existing systems. In order to limit breakout potential, the throw-weight of missiles could be limited to no more than twice the weight of their Rvs. The essential point is that the

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unit of account for START should measure destructive capability of strategic forces, and should therefore constrain the number and size of warheads. Such an RV weight limit would force the Soviets to reduce their ICBM throwweight by half in the near term, with further reductions when current systems are replaced.

Negotiations should focus attention on reductions in missile forces, rather than on bombers and cruise missiles, which do not pose the same first strike threat, and face unconstrained defenses. In the context of Soviet agreement to substantial reductions in missile forces along the lines of the U.S. proposal, the U.S. could accept a separate limit of 250 heavy bomber aircraft.

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## VIEWS OF THE CHAIRMAN, START DELEGATION

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The head of the START Delegation believes that a combination of significant reductions of ballistic missile warheads and throw-weight provides the most effective overall constraint on the destructive capability of Soviet forces. In order to enhance negotiation of a successful agreement, the United States should seek reductions in ballistic missile warheads over the first five years of an agreement to a level of perhaps 6000 with ICBM warheads limited to one-half of that total. How the reductions are phased over time is not only important to our security but to the negotiability of an agreement. Deeper reductions, down to a level of perhaps 5000 ballistic missile warheads, should be sought over a longer, 10-year period. The final warhead level should ensure U.S. ability to carry out its military objectives against Soviet forces and preserve a viable triad.

The U.S. START position should also include an initial limit on aggregate ballistic missile throw-weight set at approximately one-half of current Soviet ballistic missile throw-weight. Throw-weight is the only significant measure which completely identifies the capability of the missiles and which prevents the Soviets from exploiting the destructive potential of their heavier missiles. Limits on launchers or on reentry vehicle size, without limits on throw-weight, would allow the Soviet warheads on their existing missiles if there were a breakout or termination of the treaty. A throw-weight/warhead weight ratio would require the parties to agree, in effect, to a throw-weight aggregate, but adds another element of complexity to negotiating an agreement.

Reducing Soviet warheads and throw-weight to these levels would put significant bounds on the ICBM survivability problem we now face, would make it easier to deploy MX in a survivable mode, and would be readily understandable. Although the Soviets would initially retain a throw-weight advantage, the U.S. should make clear its objective of bringing Soviet throw-weight down to the U.S. level in ten years.

Any agreement entered into must be effectively verified. This includes as a minimum access to unencrypted telemetry and going beyond national technical means. Two additional important issues related to effective verification are the refire capability and ground mobility of ICBMs.